

<b>Report on</b>	Noise Complaint Statistics for Mid Ulster District Council 2019/ 2020
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Fiona McClements, Head of Environmental Health

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	This report is compiled to inform members of the number of noise complaints received by Mid Ulster Council in the 2019/2020 financial year. The Environmental Health Service is required to make an annual return on noise statistics to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In the last financial year, the Council's Environmental Health Service received 375 noise complaints. The complaints relate to a wide spectrum of activities from noisy neighbours, barking dogs, industrial noise and noise from entertainment premises.
2.2	When complaints are received officers will send out a 'warning letter' to the person or the business complained of outlining the fact that a complaint has been received and specifying as clearly as possible what the complaint relates to. The letter provides contact details for the officers involved and advises that the person complained of can contact the officer to discuss the nature of the complaint. Most people do not wish to disturb others, and on most occasions the complaint can be resolved at this stage.
2.3	When the initial warning letter is sent out, the complainant is also sent out monitoring sheets that can be completed over a period of about three weeks if the noise complained of does not stop.
2.4	This year has also seen the introduction of the 'noise app' by the Environmental Health Service. This allows the complainant to record the noise complained of to their mobile phones and forward to Environmental Health via the app. The app records the date, time and location of the recording.
2.5	The noise app is helping to evaluate the noise complained of and has enabled prioritising resource towards the most urgent complaints. It is also helping to filter out those complaints that are unlikely to be substantiated and is saving valuable time and resource from having to chase up these complaints. The app is proving an extremely effective tool with regard to this matter.

2.6	If noise app recordings or the monitoring sheets indicate that further monitoring may be required, officers will arrange the installation of a noise monitor at the complainant's property. Following this monitoring, officers will make a decision on whether or not the noise complained of is sufficient to be considered a 'Statutory Nuisance'.
2.7	If the monitoring reveals that noise continues to be a problem sufficient to constitute a Statutory Nuisance an 'Abatement Notice' will be served. The 'Abatement Notice' requires the noise maker to take sufficient steps to either stop making the noise in question, or to reduce it to such a level that it no longer causes a problem. Failure to comply with the terms of the Abatement Notice is likely to lead to formal action being pursued by the Council.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The total number of complaints received in the 2019/20 year was 375. This is broadly consistent with previous years' returns for the Council with an average of 393 complaints being made over the previous four years.
3.2	The complaints are broken down into numerous categories. Animal noise is consistently the most complained about category. This year the Service received a total of 194 (51.7%) complaints regarding animal noise. Animal noise covers noise from all animals, but it is overwhelmingly dogs that are the source of most of the complaints.
3.3	Mid Ulster also receives a comparatively large volume of complaints regarding industrial sources. To date Mid Ulster has had the highest number of industrial noise complaints for Northern Ireland Councils in each of the previous 4 years with an average of 24 complaints each year. Industrial noise complaints tend to be more complex than most other noise complaints, and can often be costly and difficult to resolve. This has a corresponding impact on resource both in terms of officer time and the use of specialist monitoring equipment for the Environmental Protection section.
3.4	There were 16 complaints received in relation to construction noise in this financial year. Domestic noise complaints make up 70% of complaints received in Mid Ulster compared with approximately 81% for Northern Ireland as a whole.
3.5	Mid Ulster served a total of 4 Abatement Notices last year spread out among domestic (dogs) and industrial and sporting sectors.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: N/a
	Human: N/a

	Risk Management: N/a
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members to note of the main points regarding noise complaints highlighted in this report.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 – Noise Complaint Statistics 2019/2020